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APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

FOR

A COLLAPSIBLE SWIMSUIT

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CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part of United States Patent application Ser. No. 10/185,230 filed on 28 June 2002.

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to a collapsible garment and a method for using the same. More particularly, the invention relates to a swimsuit that can be folded into its belt or a pouch attached to the belt without the necessity of taking the garment off and a method for manufacturing such a swimsuit.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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[0002] In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the "back to nature" movement and in enjoying life unencumbered by clothes. Most jurisdictions have regulations against public nudity and this acts as a restraint on those who would like to enjoy life in pretty much the state in which they were born. People will be people and those who would like to swim "in the raw", so to speak, have two choices if they wish to act unfettered: (a) wear no clothing, or, (b) wear a swimsuit on the beach and take it all off when at a safe distance from any Peeping Toms.

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[0003] As noted above, option (a) is usually illegal and, in many instances, people are not disposed to so appear in public. There is also the problem of finding a deserted location at which to take off the swimsuit. Facilities for discrete donning and removal of clothing

may not exist at beaches and swimming pools. Removing clothing also presents problems in cold and/or windy weather.

[0004] Option (b), while aesthetically more appealing to the public at large, presents dangers to the swimmer. Taking the swimsuit off under water requires either bending down or stepping out of the swimsuit and can be dangerous and has the problem of collecting sand and grit inside the swimsuit. There is the additional problem of holding on to the garment once it has been taken off: if both hands are not devoted to the task, there is the risk of losing the swimsuit and the swimmer is back to the situation presented in option (a). Prior art swimsuits also present problems in putting the swimsuit back on. There is difficulty in identifying the proper holes into which legs must go, particularly in active surf. Once back on, any accumulated sand and grit can be very uncomfortable.

[0005] United States patent 5,991,920 to *Holland*, the contents of which are fully incorporated herein by reference, teaches a swimsuit that includes a body and a belt, a portion of the body encircling a portion of the belt to form at least one pouch. The other end of the body has fastening devices that attach them to the belt opposite the pouch to form a conventional-looking swimsuit. Detaching the clips, folding up the body and inserting it into the pouch(es) gives a compact arrangement of a belt with a small pouch attached to it.

[0006] One embodiment of the invention of *Holland* is illustrated in **Fig. 1** (Prior Art).

As shown, the swimsuit 1 includes a belt 3 adapted to encircle a human waist. The belt defines an inside and an outside. The belt is preferably made of a fabric with some ability to stretch so as to maintain a snug fit with the waist of the person wearing the garment. The swimsuit also includes a body part 4, one end 4a of which defines a pair of pouches (storage compartments) 2 that enclose a portion of the belt. The sides of pouches are maintained in sliding contact with the portion of the belt that they encircle and are provided with openings purpose of which will be discussed below. As shown in Fig. 1, the pouches are separated by a seam 12 in the middle, the seam coupling the body part 4 to the belt 3. An alternated embodiment of the invention has a single pouch extending all the way across the back.

[0007] The invention of *Holland*, while being fully adapted for the function for which it was designed, was found to have some drawbacks. Drawbacks are purely aesthetic. When the swimsuit is fully folded into the pouch surrounding the belt may, it may have a bulky appearance. In addition, when the swimsuit is in the configuration for wear on the beach, it may be difficult to configure the top rear of the suit for a perfect fit.

[0008] There is a need for a swimsuit that enables the law abiding swimmer to comply with applicable rules and regulations. Such a swimsuit should allow the swimmer to enter the water discretely clothed. Such a swimsuit should preferably be safe and easy to disengage from the human body. Such a swimsuit should remain attached to the human

body without the use of hands. Such a swimsuit should be easy to put back on. In addition, it should preferably be aesthetically appealing in both the engaged and disengaged positions. The swimsuit should also be easy to manufacture. The present invention satisfies this need.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] One aspect of the present invention is a modification of a conventional swimsuit that has a pair of detachable fasteners. When the fasteners are decoupled, the portion of the swimsuit encircling human legs is “opened up” and may be rolled into a compact size that can be stowed inside a pouch on the swimsuit. Support for the swimsuit is provided by a loop that at least partially encircles a human waist.

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[0010] Another aspect of the present invention is a method of using the novel swimsuit so as to appear covered up in the closed configuration of the swimsuit and to be able to open up the swimsuit while the swimsuit is supported by a loop around the human waist.

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[0011] Yet another aspect of the present invention is a method of making a novel collapsible swimsuit by attaching a loop and a plurality of fastening devices to a prior art swimsuit that has been altered.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The present invention is best understood with reference to the following figures

wherein like numbers refer to like elements:

FIG. 1 (PRIOR ART) is a view of a prior art collapsible swimsuit.

FIG. 2 illustrates a swimsuit according to the present invention.

5 FIG. 3 illustrates the swimsuit according to the present invention in the detached configuration.

FIG. 4 illustrates the swimsuit according to the present invention in the collapsed configuration.

FIG. 5 illustrates a conventional swimsuit

10 FIG. 6 illustrates a conventional swimsuit at an intermediate step in its modification to being collapsible.

FIG. 7 (Prior Art) shows the garment of FIG. 1 with the body rolled or folded up.

FIG. 8 (Prior Art) shows the garment of FIG. 1 with the body stowed into the storage compartment in the body.

15 FIG. 9 shows an alternate embodiment of the swimsuit according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

20 [0013]The present invention is best understood with reference to **Figs. 2-5** that illustrate the arrangement of the various parts of the swimsuit. Referring to **Fig. 2**, a swimsuit **101** is shown. The swimsuit includes a loop **105** attached to the swimsuit to at least partially enclose a human waist: the exact manner in which it encircles the human waist is

discussed below. The loop may be made of any suitable material but in a preferred embodiment of the invention as shown in **Fig. 2** preferably comprises a decorative chain that is made of material resistant to corrosion by seawater. In an alternate embodiment of the invention, the loop comprises a tubular member such as a cord or “piping”. Two fasteners **103a**, **103b** on the swimsuit **101** are shown in the engaged position so that the swimsuit appears at first sight to be a conventional swimsuit with a decorative loop.

[0014]Turning now to **Fig. 3**, the swimsuit is shown in the disengaged configuration with the fastener **103a** now showing its components **103a'** disengaged into its components and fastener **103b** disengaged into its components **103b'**. In the configuration shown in **Fig. 3**, another feature of the swimsuit becomes apparent: the rear of the swimsuit is seen to have an additional piece of fabric **112** (with a seam **111**) that defines a pouch between the member **112** and the rear of the swimsuit. The pouch as shown in **Fig. 3** has two openings **113a**, **113b**.

[0015] Also seen in **Fig. 3**, the loop member is preferably inserted into the pouch (storage compartment). In one embodiment of the invention, the loop member may pass completely through the pouch and thus be capable of fully encircling the human waist. In an alternate embodiment of the invention, the loop member may be fastened at two places (not shown) to the rear of the swimsuit and thus only partially encircle the human waist. Other configurations of the swimsuit may include two pouches as taught in *Holland*.

[0016] As taught in *Holland*, the body of the swimsuit may be rolled up and inserted for storage into the pouch or storage compartment. As discussed in *Holland*, this is accomplished by rolling up the portion of the swimsuit disengaged from the portion of the swimsuit proximate to the loop and inserting the rolled up portion into the pouch. This is shown in after rolling up and storing in the pouch in **Fig. 4**. Details of the method of rolling up and storing are discussed below with reference to **Figs. 7 and 8**.

[0017] Turning now to **Figs. 5 and 6**, a method of making the swimsuit discussed above is shown. **Fig. 5** shows a conventional swimsuit **201**. By separating the swimsuit, e.g. by cutting, at locations indicated by **211a, 211b**, the configuration shown in **Fig. 6** results. Manufacture of the swimsuit of the present invention then requires the addition of a piece of fabric **221** to the swimsuit by a seam such as **231** to define a storage compartment with ends **213** shown, the addition of fastening devices at or near the locations of the separation points **211a, 211b** of **Fig. 5**, and the incorporation of the loop **205** to give a result that would appear to be substantially the same as in **Fig. 3**. The advantages of this method of making the swimsuit would be clear since this modification could be done to “off the rack” items that are widely available.

[0017] The method in which the swimsuit is stored within itself is shown using the teachings of *Holland* as an example. **FIG. 7** illustrates the invention of *Holland* when the fasteners are disengaged and the body is rolled up tightly to abut the pouches **302** encircling the belt **303**. The body in the rolled up position is depicted by **304'**. Also

shown are the openings **315** in the pouches **302**. Because the pouches of *Holland* are made of the same material as the body and are flexible, the rolled up body can be inserted into the openings and at the same time, the edges of the opening **315** folded back to the position **315'** shown in **FIG. 8**. As shown in **FIG. 8**, the ends of the opening have been folded back from both sides. As can be seen in **FIG. 8**, when the clips are disengaged, the body rolled up, and the ends of the opening folded back, the entire garment collapses to a compact shape defined by the belt and the small enclosure around it. The same method is used in the present invention for rolling up and storing the swimsuit within itself using the openings **113a**, **113b**.

[0018] Fig. 9 is an illustration of an alternate embodiment of a swimsuit in what is commonly known as a “thong” swimsuit. Shown is a swimsuit **501** with a “thong” portion **511** extending to the back of the swimsuit, the front of the swimsuit having a width greater than the width of the thong at the back of the swimsuit. The swimsuit is provided with a pouch **507** defined by the seam **505** of a piece of fabric attached to the body of the swimsuit. To simplify the illustration, the openings of the pouch are not shown. A chain **503** (or piping or other tubular member) defines a loop that can encircle the human waist. Alternatively, element **503** may be an integral part of the body of the swimsuit. As with the embodiment discussed above, the chain or tubular member may circle the human waist partially or entirely. The end of the thong is provided with a fastener **509** for attaching to the chain **503**. One important difference between this embodiment of the invention and the one discussed above (and in *Holland*) is that the

pouch is now in the front rather than in the back. The method of folding and stowing remain the same.

[0018]The foregoing description has been limited to specific embodiments of this invention. It will be apparent, however, that variations and modifications may be made to the disclosed embodiments, with the attainment of some or all of the advantages of the invention. Therefore, it is the object of the appended claims to cover all such variations and modifications as come within the true spirit and scope of the invention